

POINTS OF PROFESSIONAL INTEREST FROM THE  
ATLANTIC CITY CONFERENCE

STANDARDS IN ACTION

Appraised by the President of the Association

NEW JERSEY TRIES STARVATION

AASW MEETINGS AT NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK CON-  
FERENCE, RECOMMENDATIONS OF NOMINATING  
COMMITTEE, NOTES ON ELECTION PROCEDURE



# Professional High Lights of the National Social Work Conference

CHRISTINE C. ROBB

SOME say that there was something strangely centrifugal about the 1936 National Conference of Social Work. Some say there was evidence that social workers had somewhat settled down to a certain common understanding. At no time in the year, generally speaking, more than at this annual conference is a social worker more aware of the multiple auspices under which social work is practiced. Differences in administrative function and in sources of financial support have, throughout the history of organized social work, required that social workers explain their practice to other social workers. It is difficult under these circumstances to appraise the professional core in growth of competent opinion or in the development of the body of fundamental social work practice itself.

Out of 510 speakers, discussants and discussion leaders listed in the program of the National Conference this year, 240 are members of the professional association. It is obviously impossible to follow AASW membership participation in the Conference program. Neither is it possible to audit comprehensively particular subject matter, especially in conjunction with a busy routine and consultation service in the AASW booth, as well as Association membership and committee meetings held at this time. However, some attempt has been made to pick out certain high lights and general threads with relation to the subjects of major concern in the current program of the professional association of social workers.

The contribution that any one group represented by a section of the program or that any one session makes in a given year to an emerging professional practice or its technical generalizations is difficult to gauge. Attendance and applause are criteria of current interest in the subject or speaker announced; and that interest may stem presumably from either familiarity or lack of familiarity with the area under discussion. Expressed current interest is an index to what social workers are concerned about and under what conditions they are stimulated. No one knows as a rule to what extent the same people make up the large response in attendance at meetings which seem to represent opposite forces; and it is impossible to know what individual use will be made of what has been heard when it is tucked into total experience and returned to the field in the form of subsequent aggregate expression of social work opinion and practice.

The need to find a short-cut in solutions to

social work problems and in platforms of social work opinion is probably heightened by the fact that events in social movement today take place too rapidly and too opportunistically to permit the individual to chart a ready use of his best considered judgment based on experience.

Such pressure by its very nature adds to the difficulty that any young profession must have in recognizing and getting a perspective on the growing body of experience in practice, which constitutes the only force that will give validity to a particular group's judgment about a problem which the rest of the population encounters in a different way.

## I. GOVERNMENT SOCIAL WORK AND THE FEDERAL PROGRAM

There was a marked thread of professional consciousness weaving through the programs which made up the Conference in Atlantic City.

This was particularly true with regard to the federal relief program, where it was seen that two recognizable agreements hold generally among social workers:

1. That grants-in-aid to states by the federal government are necessary in addition to other government programs.
2. That the development of improvised emergency measures into long-time and sustained programs requires instant attention to matters of personnel.

Representatives of WPA five times sought approval of the abandonment of a program of general assistance in favor of the Administration's present program. Each time there was general agreement that in consideration of the group to be served, the present program of the Administration fails to provide and fails to accept a cooperative relationship of federal, state and local units of government as being the only way to deal with a problem of such magnitude and difficulty as relief on its present scale.

This expression of agreement among social workers doubtless has its roots in three years of AASW Delegate Conference discussion and upon the AASW 1936 platform as a symbol of concerted action and articulate opposition to the federal government's present policy. This platform does not take care of individual objections; but it is something around which social work opinion can be crystallized, something on which to focus in opposing the present federal policy, and something that by presenting a simple con-



crete program as an alternative offers some illumination in the general confusion. The validity of the platform itself is found in the response from such different forces as the Republicans and the rank and file in social work, whereas the federal administration has turned its back on the issue.

As speaker in a session of the National Coordinating Committee of Social Service Employee Groups, Aubrey Williams after extolling the WPA program said: "While we are doing all we can at the moment, and we admit that it is not enough, it is all that the public will countenance and further there is a great deal of opposition to doing as much as the WPA does." He thereupon dismissed the issue with the argument that as long as we live in a democracy we must respect the decision of the majority, and that even if we believe that the number of jobs should be trebled, we cannot hope to see them trebled if public opinion is against such a move. In connection with his statements about conflicting opinions in Congressional debate and a tendency to substitute direct relief for work programs, Mr. Williams without further comment referred to the fact that the AASW has been interpreted by conservative groups as favoring reduction of expenditures.

Harrie Lurie as program discussant developed the point that Mr. Williams had admitted that the present measures are ineffective, and that there are large numbers of people whose needs are unmet by the present program. He characterized Mr. Williams' argument that policy is dictated by public opinion as an admission that the administration is unable to meet needs because of political inexpediency.

In another session Joanna Colcord said: "The Delegates' Conference of the AASW has made it perfectly clear that the profession wants the federal government behind a work program. What it does not want is a work program which is so set up that it can become the football of politics; which forces the unemployed through relief channels in order to obtain public employment; which fails to pay going wage rates; which decries and disparages direct relief, or which monopolizes the interest and the funds of the federal government and excludes it from any participation in the general relief program.

"A direct relief program is necessary as an underpinning to work relief and categorical home relief alike."

#### *Social Work's Contribution to Government Planning*

Government responsibility for necessary provisions for social welfare commands wide social work attention with a focus which private agency programs cannot command. Inexperienced as the

country is in the administration of government relief, the formulation of government programs is everyman's concern. Even if social workers have limited understanding of government machinery, they have access to the necessary information; and they can appreciate the possibilities for effective service that are inherent in definite authorization, permanent machinery and partnership of government units and their financial resources. Every difficult experience that social work has met in its history of agency structure and diverse constituency interests lends validity to social work endorsement of a long-time government program that can be administered on the basis of general assistance. Every experience of social work with partial and uneven state public welfare programs prior to and since 1929, adds to the conviction of social workers on the present issue.

It is also true that experience gained even in extreme isolation has added to social work knowledge and understanding of the nature of social problems and of the people who suffer in relation to these problems. Such experience is a source of strength which is no less important than structure and financial planning. It must be translated and adapted to the purposes of new government programs in the form of personnel selection and training programs. The best that is known in social work practice is the thing which should be salvaged by government social work programs; and such practice should be made possible by sound structure, administrative planning and working conditions.

Faced with questions of immediate adaptation of professional knowledge in unprecedented situations such as we now have, there develops a certain loss of belief in what we have and how it has been gained. This at points limits our capacity for positive planning in rectifying defects and filling in the various gaps that appear in new and expanded programming.

Support of the merit system of selection for social work positions can be realized only as professional social work can agree on fundamentals of equipment and on how to build in these fundamentals.

#### *Personnel Selection, Professional Education and Staff Education Confused.*

The question of a staff's orientation to particular administrative functions obviously needs to be separated out from the question of basic equipment for social work at any level.

This revealed itself in many committee and open meetings where there was discussion of selection of staff or the need to establish training

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### Notes on Election Procedure

Ballots for the election of officers and committee members for the coming year were mailed to all members July 1, 1936. Members should record their votes and return the ballot promptly. All ballots, to be counted, must be in the mails by midnight, July 21, 1936. Biographical information on each nominee will be found on the ballot.

Under the Association's By-Laws the Nominating Committee is required to present the name of one candidate for each of the officers of the Association and the names of two candidates for each vacancy on the Executive and Nominating Committees. The By-Laws also provide for additional nominations by petition of 100 or more members. No nominations by petition were submitted for any of the officers so that the ballot contains the single slate of officers as presented by the Nominating Committee. It is therefore not necessary to check these names on the ballot as the return of the ballot properly checked to indicate preference for Executive and Nominating Committee members will constitute a vote for the officers.

Two nominations for committee members were submitted by petition and these names have been added to the ballot. Clara Rabinowitz of New York was nominated for the Executive Committee and Mrs. Ravenna K. Van Houten of Chicago was nominated for the Nominating Committee. The ballot therefore contains seven nominees for the Executive Committee from whom the members will vote for three, and nine nominees for members of the Nominating Committee from whom the members will vote for four. A vote for three candidates for the Executive Committee and for four candidates for the Nominating Committee is required to validate each of these sections in the ballot.

Last year many members invalidated their ballots by writing comments or additional nominations on the ballot. Attention is therefore called to the fact that nothing should appear on the ballot except the checks opposite the nominees for whom the member wishes to vote. Members should vote for the number of candidates which the ballot specifies as an incomplete vote on any section invalidates that section. Place for the name and address of the member is provided on the envelope in which the ballot is enclosed.

As members may wish to know, in casting their votes, who are the present members of the Executive Committee, their names are given here, together with the dates when their terms of office expire: 1937—Peter Kasius, St. Louis; Jacob Kepecs, Chicago; Katharine F. Lenroot, Washington, D. C.; 1938—Frederick I. Daniels, New York City; Mary A. Howell, Richmond; Florence M. Mason, Cleveland.

### The AASW Drafts Some Planks

The Division on Government and Social Work has condensed the "Outline for a Federal Assistance Program" produced at the Delegate Conference into planks for party platforms. In addition to a plank calling for federal grants-in-aid for general assistance, the parties are also asked to declare for merit selection of personnel; strengthening of the United States Employment Service; setting up an adequate national system of statistics on unemployment and relief; a federal low-cost housing program; party endorsement of ratification by the states of the Child Labor Amendment. The Association also asks that the Security Act provisions be applied to Puerto Rico and that support be given for the proposed Congressional measure permitting a department of public welfare in Puerto Rico.

This is written after the Republican Convention in Cleveland which endorsed grants-in-aid, but with suspiciously heavy emphasis on local administration and independence of program, and gave a strong general endorsement of the merit system. It is written before the Democratic Convention in Philadelphia.

Following is the suggested plank on "Unemployment and Relief":

#### UNEMPLOYMENT AND RELIEF

Because there are large numbers of people who have been deprived of their normal means of subsistence through unemployment, physical disability, illness and other causes beyond their control, whose care at the present moment in many areas is uncertain and in some cases non-existent, there is need for effective and sustained participation by the federal government in a program of general assistance in cooperation with state and local governmental units, in addition to public employment and other social security measures.

Such general assistance could best be provided through a system of grants-in-aid to states allocated by a federal authority. This authority should be lodged in one of the regularly established departments of the federal govern-

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ment, closely allied to related governmental services, particularly to the Social Security Board. Actual administration of the program of general assistance should be the responsibility of state and local governments meeting standards laid down by the federal board and assuming responsibility for an equitable share of the total cost of the program. The need of a sustained program requires the substitution of sound administrative methods for improvised emergency measures, particularly with regard to careful selection of personnel on a merit basis.

### ***Nominating Committee Makes Further Recommendations***

The Nominating Committee of the American Association of Social Workers for the year 1935-36 has presented a slate which has already been announced in *The Compass*. The committee wishes to add this further report as a result of its labors and its thinking in the execution of the task assigned to it.

1. A good many members of the AASW do not understand the method of nomination and election in operation by the Association and believe that the putting up of a single slate for officers is arbitrary and likely to frustrate the active interest of the members in the business of the Association. The committee believes that it would be wise for the Executive Committee each year to insert in *The Compass* an explanation of the present method of nomination, its mandate in the by-laws, and the discussion which led to the adoption of this method. It is possible that the Association as a whole may really prefer some other method or that there may continue to be difference of opinion. In any case, there seems now to be an unnecessary amount of misunderstanding.
2. We would recommend that *The Compass* should carry also, perhaps in several issues during the year, an announcement that nominations are in order and explanation of the offices to be filled and a request for the attention of all members to this matter, and especially to the matter of the selection of a president and members of the Executive Committee.
3. This announcement might well include some explanation of the various bases of representation upon which the ballot should be planned. This committee suggests that there should be some representation of different parts of the country, at the same time that there must be enough concentration to assure the possibility of getting together a small working group at fairly frequent intervals. This committee believes that in addition to this there is a reason for having representation from the fields of public and private welfare, social case work, group work and community organization. Other claims to representation such as that of smaller functional groups, racial and religious groups, men and women, we believe ought to be wholly subordinated to these other principles of representation.

More important than representation of territory or function in the offices we believe is activity of interest in behalf of the Association, and adherence to certain principles for which we think it stands. These principles have not been formulated definitely and perhaps ought not to be finally stated. We realize that different persons have different ideas as to the uses which should be made by social workers of a professional organization. We suggest that it might be a helpful thing to have program and principles discussed in connection with nominations and perhaps to nominate persons who are known to support certain ideas in order to draw from the membership as a whole a further expression of opinion on the question of program.

4. We suggest that the Nominating Committee in each chapter be asked to be responsible not only for chapter nominations, but also for suggestions to the national Nominating Committee.
5. We consider it most important that the Nominating Committee of the AASW shall hold at least one meeting, and we recommend that money be appropriated for this purpose. Much time and trouble will be saved and probably a better result obtained in this way. The extra expense would be somewhat offset by the saving in telegrams and telephone calls necessary when the committee cannot meet.
6. We recommend, if it can be arranged, an early conference of the newly elected Nominating Committee with some members of the outgoing Nominating Committee on method, etc.
7. We recommend that it become our custom to expect a report each year from the Nominating Committee on its procedure.
8. The national office provides the Nominating Committee with lists of past officers and elected committee members. We recommend that this service be described in *The Compass* for the information of all members.
9. We believe that identifying information as to the candidates should be sent out with the ballot as well as announced previously in *The Compass*.

#### *Nominating Committee*

WENDELL F. JOHNSON,  
FLORENCE M. WARNER,  
ARLIEN JOHNSON,  
WILLIAM W. BURKE,  
M. ANTOINETTE CANNON, *Chairman*.

\* \* \*

Dorothy Kahn, who is on the program of the International Conference of Social Work which will be held in London, July 12-17, has been asked by the Executive Committee of the AASW to represent the Association at any meetings or activities relating to its professional interests and to bring back information which she considers pertinent to the activities of the AASW.



### *Copies of Directory at Pre-publication Price*

Attention of AASW members is called to an opportunity to secure the 1936 biographical *Directory of Members* at the original pre-publication price. There are approximately 141 cloth and 832 paper copies of the directory which were ordered by members last fall at the pre-publication price, but which will not be held after July 15th and will, instead, be offered at the pre-publication price as long as they last to other members who wish to take advantage of the original quotation for members. Orders should be accompanied by a check and those wishing a cloth-bound copy (\$2.00) should get their orders in shortly after July 15, because of the limited supply. Orders for cloth-bound copies received after the supply is exhausted will be filled by sending the paper edition (\$1.50) and a refund of 50 cents unless otherwise requested.

Other than the offer of the directory to chapters for official chapter reference purposes, no exceptions have been made to the deadline of March 1st, at which time the price went to \$5.00. This

has seemed important in fairness to the members who ordered the volume in advance, thus committing themselves to support of the project, and giving the office an opportunity to estimate the membership demand for the volume.

The Association, however, cannot afford to hold after July 15th these 973 copies that were ordered but have not been paid for when there are other members who would like to buy them at the original price. Members who ordered advance copies were notified in the June *Compass* that these would not be held for them after July 1st, but an extension of time to July 15th is allowed for payment, after which date other members may purchase these reserved copies.

For those who have not seen it, the Foreword of the directory is given here because it is an official interpretation of the directory project and should be common knowledge among the members. Otherwise, there may be members who will not be in position to see and call to the attention of administrators and others who are not members, the several kinds of usefulness the volume may have for them. The project would not have been endorsed by the Executive Committee had the Committee not considered that its chief value was

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its professional usefulness, not its availability as a mailing or address list. It is hoped that the project will be self-liquidating as well as useful.

### DIRECTORY FOREWORD

This is the first issue of a biographical directory of the members of the American Association of Social Workers. It is intended to lend itself to a better understanding of social work by making available certain pertinent information about the activities and qualifications of the people who make up the professional association. This information should be accessible to all social workers, persons in related fields, public and private officials, and to the general public. It is tangible evidence that there is an organized group of social workers whose primary concern is with professional development on a selective membership basis.

Without such a directory the objectives and activities of the organized group in this emerging profession of social work are prone either to seem theoretical and elusive or to depend upon chance and proximity. Circumstances which have now forced wide public attention upon social work administration and social work opinion require that there be available an official index to what kinds of experience are represented in the membership of the American Association of Social Workers.

The directory presents biographical information in a condensed form which attempts to retain and describe the major up-to-date qualifications of persons concerned. The information is based on the member's statement of his educational background and of his experience within the past ten years. Much has had to be excluded in the interest of brevity. Much pertinent material does not lend itself to uniformity and codification, such as is possible in the case of the older professions.

Data recorded reflect the variety of social work activities and the changing concepts of professional education which have influenced the membership as a whole in its determination of current standards. Wherever biographical material does not accompany name and address it is because no statement was submitted in response to the special questionnaire which was sent to the membership.

During recent years the development of the profession of social work has been rapid. Nevertheless, at no time have there been sufficient numbers of well qualified social workers to meet the demand even before the expansion in public welfare programs under emergency auspices. This accounts largely for the fact that the membership of the American Association of Social Workers shifts both functionally within the field of social work and geographically over the country. Although changes of position occur constantly there is, wherever biographical data have been submitted, sufficient information to permit tracing a particular individual to his present address.

The geographic listing of members indicates the unevenness in distribution of professional social work personnel for the country.

Acknowledgment is made to Miss Jessica Barr who is responsible for the difficult task of compiling, interpreting, classifying and condensing the biographical statements. This acknowledgment is made with special reference to the extreme diversity of the data submitted.

This lack of uniformity reflects the need for agreement among the various functional fields on comparable

means for describing and classifying the important elements of preparation for and the responsibilities and positions in social work practice. This is the first attempt to deal with these problems in a cross-section of social work by formulating brief biographical statements with some degree of uniformity.

The requirements for membership in the American Association of Social Workers comprise the only form of national certification that exists for social work as a whole. This volume is therefore launched as a partial way of informing social workers and the public as to what professional social work personnel is at this point of development.

### *Issues of "The Compass" at a Premium*

Many issues of *The Compass* in recent as well as earlier volumes are out of print, so that it is impossible to fill frequent requests from libraries, schools, agencies, chapters and individuals for additional copies or copies needed to complete permanent files. Arrangements have been made to supply all of the chapters with a permanent file copy of *The Compass* from now on and members are reminded to keep their own copies for filing unless a complete file of *The Compass* is readily available to them. Members who have access to a permanent file and therefore feel that they do not need all of the back issues may send them to the national office for use in filling requests for issues needed to complete permanent files in libraries and elsewhere. Issues particularly needed for this purpose are: March, 1934; January, May, June, October, 1935; and February, April, 1936.

### *AASW Booth Busy Spot at National Conference*

The AASW booth was one of the many busy spots at the National Conference. It was located next to the booths of the Joint Vocational Service and the Association of Schools of Social Work, an arrangement which these organizations have all agreed was advantageous, since it brought into close proximity the three national organizations whose primary concern is professional social work personnel.

Over 300 members of the Association registered at the booth, an innovation which was introduced for the first time this year in response to suggestions made by members at previous National Conferences. The value of the registration arrangement was clearly demonstrated, since it brought so many members to the booth and provided an opportunity for them to consult informally with members of the national staff on chapter or individual matters, which otherwise they might have felt were not sufficiently urgent to call for a special appointment.

Requests from both members and non-members



for information, advice and assistance from the national staff during the Conference week, resulted in approximately 350 individual interviews covering practically every aspect of the Association's program—membership standards, their interpretation and application; professional education; personnel selection, including civil service and other examination procedures; employment practices; chapter organization and functioning; publications; interpretation.

The Association's newest book, *This Business of Relief*, the Proceedings of the 1936 Delegate Conference, came off the press just in time to go on sale at the booth and speedily became the Association's best seller, with continuing interest shown in the Association's earlier publications and a particularly heavy demand for pamphlets and *Compass* reprints. Members who had not seen the biographical *Directory of Members* had an opportunity to examine it and to see for themselves how much information of professional value it contains.

## AASW MEETINGS IN ATLANTIC CITY

Three meetings of the membership of the Association were held during the National Conference of Social Work; and eleven national divisions and committees met during and just prior to the Conference.

The Association's Program meeting which is scheduled annually on Conference time so that there is no conflict with general Conference sessions, presented to a large audience some clarification of the professional base of this Association's operations.

Martha Maltman read a paper on "Some Points on Professional Standards, their values and uses and their weaknesses," written in two parts by Miss Maltman and Grace F. Marcus, which constitutes a report on some informal discussion by a group of members in the New York City Chapter.\* The group explored current differences of opinion about existing standards and discovered that policies could hardly be considered "until we were clearer about the real uses of standards as instruments for the development of a profession, even when these standards are recognizably faulty; and that we had tended as individuals to assume their usefulness without making sure that we fully understood their purposes, values and functions in relation to the growth of professional social work." Exploration also was made by the group as to the "basic connection between professional standards and certain material factors

Exhibit material on display at the booth for examination by members and others interested included sample copies of chapter publications and reports, sets of the bulletins which have been sent by the national office to the chapters during the past year, a scrapbook of newspaper clippings showing the extent to which AASW material has been used by the press since the Association has had a staff member devoting full time to social work interpretation, and scrapbooks arranged by subject to indicate material which has appeared in *The Compass* in the last year or two bearing on the Association's major interests and activities.

A large spot map showing the geographical distribution of the Association's 9894 members, the location of the 71 chapters with state or local jurisdiction, and the five state councils, attracted considerable interest. Supplementing this poster was one made from the chart which appeared on the cover of the April, 1936, *Compass*, graphically illustrating the growth of the Association's membership from 1924, when there were 3100 members, to the present membership figure.

in the working of social agencies which determine whether those standards have more than a verbal significance."

Possible future connections with the pre-professional social workers, they felt, would be affected by our conceptions of the value of standards as instruments for developing social work; and our ability to strengthen the growth of public relief work would depend upon these same conceptions.

On the question of the coercive use of standards the group suggested: "It may be, however, that coercion looms large because the positive aspects of standards by which coercion is justified are not sufficiently clear. If on the other hand, these advantages are not really socially productive and serve only the selfish interests of a partisan group, then our coercion may not be legitimate." After taking up the personal, intellectual and social reasons for having standards and the fact that they afford a basis for the organization and functioning of a professional group, it was recognized that because of the youth of the AASW as an organization and of social work as a professional field, it is not strange that "the Association's ground for concerted activity is neither solid nor uniform. . . . These weaknesses as they affect the validity of any current standards are not, however, arguments against the validity of standards as such, but are rather justifications for the use of standards as stimuli to the conscious study and correction of flaws in knowledge, skills and experience. It would therefore seem that any

\* Published in a pamphlet and available through the national office. Price 10c.



change in standards which would increase the heterogeneous character of a professional group would seriously retard its achievement of a basic competence and would also dilute its present resources for meeting those general problems which cannot be understood or solved without professional knowledge and unified effort."

The relation of working conditions and of personnel and employment practices to the realization of standards of competence, it was brought out in the paper, has been largely left to highly individualistic policies and practices. "Social work has been hampered by timidities which derive from earlier ideas that philanthropic services should be voluntary and should constitute their own reward. . . . Social work on the whole has been disposed always to overestimate its responsibilities both for the existence and the cure of social problems and consequently has felt inadequate about the degree to which it was living up to its own obligations and to the expectations of the community. . . . Uncertain that its developing knowledge and skills had bona fide values, social work has tended to accept unrealistic demands for quantity of service because of its conflict about a quality it was not inwardly sure was socially evident and useful. . . . The need of general criteria which would establish a professional level for discussion of working conditions and personnel and employment practices has not yet been properly conceded."

Conceding that some of these things constitute a neglect of public welfare issues, the paper pointed out that there has been a "defective realization among social workers of the basic connection between working conditions and the other standards for which they have been struggling; this defect has sometimes been responsible for an unrealistic submission to limitations without proper anticipation of those consequent inadequacies in service which are then charged to social work incapacity to do a job."

Of the conflicts between professionals and non-professionals the paper stated: "The lag in defining the material bases for competent performance has been responsible in large part for unnecessary conflict between the professional and non-professional groups in social work. . . . Insofar as professional social workers seemed to condone or ignore the bad working conditions and unregulated employment and personnel practices which obtained in public set-ups, they appeared to minimize issues which are just as important from the professional standpoint as from that of labor and seemed to be doing little to avoid the violations, inefficiencies and wastes which would be exaggerated either in professional or non-professional performance by conditions so antagonistic to any efficient functioning."

Existing defects in criteria for judging the agency, were commented on as follows: "The present obscurity leaves to gossip and rumor a prominent role in determining an agency's professional standing and makes inquiry into its conditions and practices an individual challenge or impudence. . . . It must also be recognized that the absence of such criteria deprives the agency interested in improving its standards of the support which is found in formulation based on general experience. It is not suggested that any rigid, universal, ideal scale be set up as a basis for measuring an agency's professional standing. But the present tendency to regard certain facts about an agency's conditions, policies, practices and staff as purely private matters is opposed to the development of a proper sense of professional responsibility for dealing with those handicaps to competent practice and training which are preventing acknowledged standards from having real meaning."

Both the individual and the agency thus "are exposed to all the hazards and disappointments which are present in buying a pig in a poke. . . . This incomplete development of a base for standards has resulted in an inadequate and confused understanding on our part of the ways in which they can be used. . . . A dynamic concept of standards would enable professional social workers to use them more capably for relative rather than absolute ends."

Walter Pettit discussed this paper in connection with his long experience and leadership on the National Membership Committee with respect to interpretation and administration of the Association's membership requirements.

Frieda Romalis discussed it with respect to her thinking about the problems and formulations of the Divisions on Personnel Standards and Employment Practices.

Dorothy Kahn in her role as president of the national professional association discussed standardization as an indispensable process which will enable us to practice social work in harmony with the ideas around which we have organized ourselves into this association. Miss Kahn stressed our failure in courage to mark off the professional area of social workers' responsibility to the development of the field. Her paper is published in full in this issue of *The Compass*.

The two further AASW meetings of the membership will be reported in the August issue of *The Compass*: the meeting on Chapter Organizations and Programs and the meeting of AASW Practitioner Groups.

There will also be in that issue some reports on the meetings of national divisions and committees which were held during or just prior to the National Conference of Social Work.



## The Professional Base of Operations\*

DOROTHY C. KAHN

*President, American Association of Social Workers*

IT is my task today to discuss this business of professional standards from the point of view of an elected official of the Association. I think this particular approach should have no special weight with you excepting as it reveals the thinking of one who has for two years shared responsibility for the administration of your by-laws and your program. This experience has pointed up for me, as I know it has for my fellow officers and those who preceded us, and those who will come after, all of the problems which we are organized to study and to solve. While I shall try to keep my eye focused on the elected official's approach in what I am about to say, I know that you will understand—because it is in the nature of our profession that this should be so—that my point of view arises not only out of this responsibility, but also out of my experience in the practice of social work.

This is equally true of the members of the group whose reports you have just heard. That essential factor does not create a bias on the part either of that group or myself, but rather provides a fundamental validity for our respective conclusions. We are assembled here in what might be called a purely professional capacity, with no restriction, restraint, no inhibition on the exercise of our most abstract thought on the subject matter of our profession. But our profession is practiced in a variety of places and in a variety of ways, and professional concepts cannot, like so-called pure philosophy, exist out of relation to their specific practice.

It is important, therefore, that the process of discovering, articulating, questioning, and revising, professional standards shall continue to be a major activity of this Association. This activity is to the practice of social work like an enabling act in relation to a fundamental change of legislation, without which a law might die on the statute books. So this discussion of standards is an indispensable process which enables us to practice social work in harmony with the ideas around which we have organized ourselves into this Association.

Perhaps one of the most dangerous notions is that which associates standards with something that is immobile, unchanging and fixed. The next most dangerous notion is that they must be self-

explanatory in this stage of our development. These two notions react upon each other because the obvious need to explain and defend standards creates an impression of immutable adherence to the particular standards defended. The space, or more statistically, the lag thus created between the things we fought, bled and died for yesterday and the standards for which we now lie in ambush (so to speak) constitute the "no man's land" of the profession. One of my own most interesting educational experiences was being slapped on the back some years ago by an incorrigible Board member who said, "You certainly have your Board behind you—ten years behind!" Nor was I deluded into thinking this a delicate tribute. On the contrary. But there is a third dangerous notion that we harbor—perhaps as a result of the desperate effort to close that kind of gap. In the zeal of effort to be understood and supported we may be naively unaware of the progress that has been made. There is healthy evidence that our public is in some respects well up to us—maybe a few jumps ahead. As evidence of this, in all the clamor about the lack of demand for qualified personnel, I would like to cite the leading editorial of a Philadelphia paper on May 26—in connection with this Conference:

"It is natural that Philadelphia should be strongly represented in the National Conference of Social Work now under way at Atlantic City. In the service of the 141 agencies of welfare which recently joined forces in the conduct of the United Campaign, of the numerous other philanthropic organizations which prefer to maintain an independent system of financing, and of the local relief board, is a small army of trained social workers keenly interested in the problems to be discussed at the national gathering. Representatives of these are at the conference to teach and to learn.

"This country has had an expensive object lesson in amateur management of welfare, and particularly relief, activities with a strong political flavoring. It must by now be conscious of the fact that the gigantic problems suddenly thrust upon it by the depression cannot long continue to be handled as they have been in the stress of emergency. Some of these problems are going to be permanent, and must be faced with deeper appreciation of their difficulties.

"To avert waste in the expenditure of public money in relief and in the multiple phases of social security activities there must be more competent direction and a skilled personnel."

In addition to these taxpayers, the very situations that have seemed most threatening to standards have brought out at least one hitherto minor character in that amorphous personality—the pub-

\* Address given at a meeting of the AASW National Conference of Social Work, Atlantic City, May 28, 1936.



lic. When organized clients begin to demand more and better service, there is implicit in this demand a recognition of the values of standards that have either been taken too much for granted, or not expected to be appreciated in that quarter. One challenge to professional standards is therefore seen not merely as a self-activating force, which presumably it has always been, but also as a public requirement.

No matter how much of our public may continue to underestimate our professional goods or even to demand a rather shoddy product, the demand situation itself creates a whole series of responses wholly different from either the "missionary" (if I may use these words) or "self-realization" motives.

This leads me to add a fourth item to the list of positive reasons for standards presented earlier. It is this fourth item that I would especially wish to discuss as a responsible official, because while I do not think it was overlooked in the deliberations of the group, I think I am personally ready to take a step in this area for which they may feel we are not yet prepared. I refer to our ethical responsibilities for standards. It may be questioned whether this could be wholly separated from the social factor described in the group discussion, but as we look at the life history of other professions, we find this factor taking a major place in their development. It is a basic assumption of any profession that the discovery and articulation of standards in practice in any area involve an obligation to prevent, if possible, either the use of sub-standard practice, or the invasion of the field by non-professional persons. It is possible that in this profession we have not yet been able to mark off the areas of practice with sufficiently definite lines. I suspect, however, that much of our failure to do this has been due to a lack of courage on the one hand, and lack of clarity on the other, about the positive aspects of our relationship to non-professional or pre-professional practitioners. Their progress toward inclusion in the professional group, if that is their aim, would be enormously assisted by a more positive position on the part of the profession. The same is true of the situation of so-called social workers engaged in jobs of doubtful professional character. I choose the following illustration because we have latterly been so greatly confused by questions related to the nature of activities in our field. For instance, there is classic theory still held by some professional persons, that you do not need to have professional workers to administer relief. This would be manifestly absurd if our attention were focused on the organisms with which we are dealing in however great numbers, and for whatever reasons, instead of on vague "fields of work."

If you have ever gone into a drug store as people commonly do, and requested the druggist to take a cinder out of your eye, you will find him very loathe to undertake the task. He will probably tell you he is not permitted to do this, although I can find no legal or ethical pronouncements on the subject. If he does, he will make it clear to you that he is not a doctor, and that he is prohibited from using any instrument for this purpose, and (here the analogy may seem unfortunate) that he cannot accept a fee for the service. He will probably refer you immediately to a physician. This is not because the druggist is not an adequate person in his field, but because there are recognized areas of competence, mutually respected, between his occupation and the medical profession. However expert he may be in the compounding of an eye wash, he will not, if he is a conscientious person, undertake to deal directly with the delicate organism for which he prepares soothing remedies. Some similar distinctions are urgently needed within the occupation known as social work. There are many working in this field, whose claim to competence is based on their interest in compounding social eye wash. This is perhaps an essential activity, but it should be sharply distinguished from the direct or indirect treatment of the human mechanism which is suffering from social cinders.

When we have made this kind of distinction, we will then be free to move on to the problem of the non-professional or pre-professional persons, practicing in our field, because it can hardly be expected that persons who aspire to practice in an area to which we have presumably staked a claim, will have much respect for that claim so long as our pronouncements about our title to the area do not wholly agree with the concrete evidence. This situation may be as inevitable in a developing profession as it is in the blanketing in process of beginning civil service, but it cannot be overlooked as an element of confusion to those who are looking to the profession for leadership.

Although we may not have been able thus far to make these distinctions within the membership of the professional association, we are, nevertheless, not relieved of the responsibility of making them in the daily practice of social work. Here again we are betrayed by our desire to be inclusive and reasonable. If we have discovered anything in the last five or six years, it is the fact that the basic professional attitude can be taught to people who have not yet acquired either the basic knowledge or a range of skill in performance. We are doing neither those pre-professional persons nor the profession of social work any good by being confused by this fact. Perhaps we might compare this situation with that of the medical care during the war. On the battlefield and



in the base hospitals there was a great dearth of physicians. The result was that a great variety of things were done by other persons under the direction of physicians, and done with heroism and skill. Some of those aides have subsequently joined the profession, but no one undertook to say, "Because we cannot get enough doctors, we will call these other people doctors," nor did the hospital aides ever expect this. Not the least surprising, and sometimes shocking experience of young workers in the greatly expanded field of public welfare, is to find themselves suddenly baptized and identified with the social work profession, to which some of them aspire and others never intended to enter. The former group are gradually going through the educational and clinical processes that the profession requires. The others are gradually dropping out.

My thesis, therefore, is that we have an ethical obligation to clarify this situation still further, and to eliminate some of the confusion in our own minds which interferes with the progress of the pre-professional practitioner. We cannot blanket them into the profession as we blanketed in the great group of us who wished to be called "social workers" in the initial stages of professional organization. Having discovered a set of standards in which we believe, we cannot declare a moratorium on them. Neither can we, if I may mix my metaphors, apply a thin veneer of training in the form of institutes, quick training courses, and what-not, to make them look like the real thing. They are good enough as they are, assuming that they have been well selected and are under professional direction, so long as the field requires more extended service than there is ready to hand. They can no longer be made overnight. They must, if professional social work is to progress, go through a more rigid discipline than their predecessors. In this connection I would like to reaffirm my personal belief in some form of affiliation with this pre-professional group. I would like to believe that the proposal made to achieve this was voted down on the grounds of its form or method, rather than its purpose.

Another aspect of this ethical responsibility is emphasized in the second part of the previous report in the discussion of bad practices in agencies. I know that the committee did not mean to imply, although it might easily be gathered from this discussion, that all of the bad practices in social agencies are in the public welfare field. Some of the most shocking lapses in this respect have been the distinguishing characteristic of agencies privately maintained, and I believe it is likewise true that some of the most distinct progress that has been made in working conditions, regulated employment, and good personnel prac-

tice, has been the contribution of some public agencies. This may be true because of the fact that a public agency cannot get away with such bad working conditions as can a privately supported one, rather than to any distinctions among professional leadership. But the tolerance which professional persons seem to have for working conditions that are unfavorable to good performance, is bound to lead many professional as well as non-professional persons to hope for redress through the channel of organized labor which has traditionally been more interested in this aspect of work. I personally see no reason why this should not be so, nor do I see in this phenomenon any necessary antithesis to professional organization. There are things which social workers, doctors, and lawyers can secure through that type of organization which should not be expected from, nor confused with the benefits of professional associations. Neither is a complete substitute for the other. We need to realize, I believe, that working conditions have to be very bad indeed to really hamper a truly professional person. If this were not true, they could not have persisted so long. On the other hand, the most advantageous working conditions will not alone produce professional performance. The ethical principle, however, enters at a point that is too seldom recognized. We do tolerate conditions that do hamper professional performance. We go to work for impossible agencies in the vain hope of bringing up their standards. Moreover, we go to work and encourage others to go to work for unnecessary and obsolete agencies, and we tolerate their existence in the community, and rationalize our lack of courage with a hypodermic of better standards. I do not think I would find general agreement even in the group here present on the proposition that this is un-professional conduct. Likewise, it may be said that uncritical adherence to a program which inevitably involves misrepresentation of that program as well as of all opposition to it may be good fascism, but it is not professional conduct.

We have such an incurable desire to get along with everybody, and to be constructive, that we foster the very misunderstandings that we deplore. Can we not discipline ourselves as well as young workers, to discriminate in choosing and continuing in employment, not only because of these ethical obligations, on which I seem to be so intent, but also because the results of indiscriminating choices directly affect our future careers? Can we not also expect community funds and federations to discriminate in this matter in making appropriations? Hospitals and nurses' training schools are rated. It is conceivable that social agencies and even schools of social work



might similarly be rated, and that a professional organization would have a determining voice in the rating process. One could let one's fancy run on in this vein to the point where we might contemplate the setting up of a social workers' social agency, like the doctors' hospital, an experiment in professional management. This is not because we think we could do these things better, but because I should like to see us engaged in an enterprise in which we would have an unhampered opportunity to demonstrate what professional standards could do for the practice of social work when there are no convenient scapegoats of public apathy or other hindrances to which to attribute our failures. Here would be an opportunity for the rigid application of those standards which we recognize as indispensable to the professional practice of social work. Here would be an opportunity to demonstrate that the professional does not rest on a combination of external processes through

which one arrives at professional status, but is determined by the consistent adherence to principles of performance on the part of professionally-minded persons.

Perhaps the greatest value of the discussion that has been presented to us today, is the development of the thesis that social workers need to do many more things for themselves—things that cannot be left to the inequalities of agency development, or the functional limitations of various types of organizations or even the schools. Agencies and functions are the setting in which the profession is currently practiced, but in order to realize itself fully, it must see that setting as a background and an opportunity, rather than as a control. As we do more of this kind of thinking, we shall be making the standards of social work useful to all of those who are practicing in this field, whether they are at the moment members of the Association or not.

## Professional High Lights of the National Social Work Conference

*(Continued from page 3)*

programs. Attempts to see the elements of success and the elements of failure in performance in social work positions repeatedly brought out negative points about what "has not been acceptable to the community." This attitude seemed frequently quite unrelated either to the question of what it is that the social worker needs to know in order to do his job or in what terms this can be understood by the community. It was difficult to ascertain what it was that one thoughtful public welfare administrator had actually done that would account for changes in staff attitudes which he knew had been accomplished because of the better orientation to the public agency's function which resulted. It would therefore be difficult to get out of some of these discussions points that would really let a professional school of social work know which of the elements of failure might be attacked constructively by the school.

At times it seemed as though staff education were being considered as a new concept instead of as an incompletely developed process. Not only did some statements sound as though staff education were a substitute for professional education but also as though the need for staff education had sprung primarily out of some failure on the part of professional education. That staff education should be a continuous process related to the various kinds of equipment represented by existing or prospective staff and related to whatever functions are peculiar to the agency—private or public—was certainly understressed. It was difficult to see therefore how the tremendous burden of filling in gaps that are beyond control at

any one source and of reinforcing the total personnel situation could properly be distributed.

At few points was it brought out that many of the difficulties are not within the power of social work to meet; that it will take time to bring sufficient numbers of social workers under a professional discipline which will prepare them for all the key positions with responsibility for those larger numbers who must be helped to carry out well their more limited responsibilities; that the agency must in the interest of practical economy make special provision for reinforcing the equipment of people who are employed for the jobs that must be filled and cannot command fully qualified personnel. Where there was conviction about the nature of the job and acceptance of the practical difficulties, more ingenuity was shown. For instance, a position that requires experience in case work, public administration and some accounting is obviously very difficult to fill. Instead of hunting for a needle in the haystack or proposing a complete change in professional education to meet this, it was obvious to some that if the duties and requirements could not be changed, a combination of devices would have to be worked out: a selection of the fundamental requirements, a reinforcement in supervision to meet part of the requirements, and perhaps, as in the case of accounting, a consultation unit to lift part of the duties out of the complex functional picture.

There was greater conviction and understanding manifest in the statements of those individuals who because of long experience and professional perspective have obviously not been thrown off their base to the extent of viewing multiplied



difficulties as new difficulties.

The problem of qualifications for the job of welfare administration was attacked by Grace Abbott and Ewan Clague. Argument was advanced for the administrator's need to be grounded in the field in which he is dealing.

## II. PERSONNEL STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

It is an important fact for the professional association of social workers that the National Conference of Social Work has a committee on Public Welfare Personnel. Since the committee's assignment is limited to the public welfare field, there is need not to lose sight of the fact that the same high standards are required for public and private social work with a common base in professional education. It is of importance therefore that one session of the Conference's Social Case Work Section was devoted to papers by Walter West and Florence Sytz on the purpose and value of professional standards and on the relation of professional education to social work practice.

### *Purpose of Professional Standards*

Walter West, carrying with him into a general Conference session the full weight of the American Association of Social Workers' program, opened his paper by saying:

"Standards are such common, everyday, household utilities, that I suspect there is little doubt as to their purposes or values for social work. Pounds, yards, bushels, dollars and an infinite number of standards of size, bulk, weight, quality, are the ever-present devices by which life in a complicated world is simplified. A standard is for measurement of bulk, a test of quality, an identification of the genuine."

While necessity forces the use of standards in selection of social work personnel, he pointed out that not all standards are professional; and he cited the use of such substitute criteria as residence, party registration and marital status which are created for the purpose of simplifying administrative problems.

He discussed facts and opinions which are the forces that lead social workers and their allies to make immediate consistent and sustained efforts to head off such substitute standards.

"The base for a professional activity could be said to be laid at the point where architecture rather than carpentry takes charge of building. One of the factors which appears common to all professions, is the dependence in each case on a body of knowledge so large that it is not possible for any one practitioner to acquire that knowledge during practice. So a period of concentrated study in which this basic knowledge has been compressed, that is to say, professional education, is substituted for craft or apprentice training. . . .

"Wherever there are important aspects of a situation which may alter themselves or be altered, or where un-

known factors exist in a problem, breadth and versatility of knowledge are required. This is essential in social work. It happens, however, that at this crucial time, when plans are being developed for many new social programs, such as those promoted by the security act and relief programs, much of the discussion on the all-important question of personnel for those programs, misses this primary point completely. . . . This has disclosed an alarming lack of conviction on the part of social workers themselves, many of them in positions of great influence, concerning the validity of the knowledge which social work has acquired. Instead, case work is apparently regarded as a series of steps to be taken, in their proper order; valueless unless applied with the full force of the magic case work sequence. It is like saying that a knowledge of anatomy or physiology or contagion would not be necessary in an epidemic or under fire in an advanced field hospital, because in neither case would the qualified practitioner be able to do all the things he knew how to do, or work with all the facilities at his command in a more sheltered situation. . . . How important it is to instruct ourselves and interpret to others that social work has learned that certain relationships are helpful and humane, and that others are stupid and destructive and that the sum of this knowledge is professional education. . . . I believe this concept of social work to be so important that, if it could be clearly understood, many of the problems of support and interpretation could be liquidated; the relationship of education to practice would be clarified where in many places it is now doubted and obscured; standards could be set and maintained where they are now weak or broken."

The paper then took up in explanation of the slow emergence of this professional principle the limited objectives of any one agency and the craft-like skills which its staff was responsible for in the agency's beginnings:

"It is not surprising, therefore, that the professional aspects of social work are still opposed by hostilities which are entrenched in vestiges of original organization forms, in competition between agency programs, and by a lack of conviction in the social workers whose advent and experience in social work has been conditioned by all these influences. Public programs and social agencies confronted by public indifference to the social problems they dealt with, were forced into missionary attitudes in their zeal to extend their good works. . . . Measures adopted by some agencies to raise funds were so bad as to require reform. Standards as to money-raising were formulated. . . . Expansion of service went forward, however, at a greater rate than that of public comprehension. . . . This led to . . . raising money for a limited purpose, and spending on a broader one. . . . The financial problem is stressed here to show some of the tensions which were created in social work development, which were hostile to professional growth, and still are. . . . It was necessary to train the workers of each agency in a different set of things to be done, and around these separate banners strong agency loyalties were born and fostered. . . .

"What I believe to be necessary at this time, however, is to root out with no loss of time, the still flourishing fancy that each segment of a human problem needs a



different kind of person to deal with it, with a different training, and with a whole set of loyalties to special methods, or to a special clientele identified by its separate problem. . . . I am not expecting to do away with agencies or with their financial needs, but . . . an 'unemployable,' God help us for that term, is certainly not so unlike an 'employable' that we need a different governmental unit to deal with him. . . .

"If the public is aware only of limited ability necessary to find suitable boarding homes, or to go through whatever steps are necessary preliminary to a relief grant, it could be pardoned for not understanding why college education, through grounding in social sciences, or a year or two of special study in a professional school, should be required for the performance of those simple tasks. . . . The emphasis on inessential differences . . . has discouraged the candid and unguarded comparison of data and policy, experience and discovery, which is the fermenting process of professional growth. . . .

"The schools of social work have been among the most potent of the progressive influences at work against the trade, or guild, or craft stage of social work. . . .

"The knowledge which makes social work professional is embodied in the social workers to whom it has been imparted. The constant and pressing problem of administration, imperfectly appreciated, I fear, by some administrators, is to give to social work the chance to make its full contribution in the persons of these social workers. . . .

"This will continue to be slow going, however, until social workers use every avenue of interchange with each other to develop and deepen their own conviction that social work has a socially useful knowledge, applicable through the service of its practitioners."

### *Professional Education and Practice.*

Following Mr. West's paper, a paper by Florence Sytz developed some factors in the relationship between professional education and professional practice. Drawing upon Abraham Flexner's report in 1910 on Medical Education in the United States and Canada, the paper showed graphically that medical education, like social work education, began as a supplement to the apprenticeship system. Against a background picture of the needs of the southern states and Louisiana in particular, Miss Sytz pointed to progressive provisions obtained through the leadership of the professionally educated social workers within and without the Louisiana Emergency Relief Administration:

"It was the federal government and not the home folks who introduced us to commodities. The federal government's getting out of the 'business of relief' in the south has meant getting out of social welfare as well. We were not just administering relief in Louisiana, we were also getting children into school, providing medical care, teaching individuals how to feed, clothe and care for themselves and their children; in short, our social workers were engaged in those preventive services that the Federal Emergency Relief Administrator longed for, but failed to recognize. . . . Malaria, hookworm, pellagra,

illiteracy and the plantation system take a heavy toll in terms of individual initiative and all that we mean when we talk about a person's capacity for self-maintenance. . . . We will have to get our northern social workers to stop setting up differentials for the south in this matter of good professional practice. . . ."

Borrowing Charles Beard's concept—"Competence in the individual, not dogma, is our supreme objective"—Miss Sytz made a brief for "an individual able to critically analyze and evaluate these practices and to assume some community leadership in such matters as public assistance, modern theories of child care and family adjustment, old age pensions, public welfare legislation, social research, et cetera. . . ."

It is not possible to agree with Miss Sytz that "too great a concentration on social case work . . . has almost robbed us of our heritage of social reform" unless by that she meant that too narrow a use of social case work has obscured our consciousness of the social environment. There should be ready agreement with the next statement in the paper:

"The unit of practice will continue to be the individual client, but if the individual is to obtain the help he desires and needs, it is important for social workers to be able to deal effectively with the environmental factors which have an influence on the individual and his social well-being. . . ."

The business of the school of social work, Miss Sytz made clear, is to disturb such traditional beliefs as the student brings with him in such concepts as "worthy," "unworthy," "grateful," etc.

"The curriculum of a school of social work is made up of courses designed to aid the student in understanding not only the individual, but the individual in his social setting and the inter-relationship that knits the two. . . . It becomes increasingly important that schools and practitioners recognize that social work has course material of its own, as well as the material from the social sciences that we adapt for our own use. . . ."

Progress has been made in the status of field work courses described by Lee and Kenworthy in 1929 as tending "to be an opportunity to observe a series of uncorrelated meaningless tasks . . . without conscious effort on the part of the supervisor to make the experience of the maximum educational value." This progress Miss Sytz attributed to:

" . . . the increasing emphasis placed by schools on developing content in the field work courses and on the importance of the professional education, competence and teaching ability of field work instructors; on agency and school recognition of the generic aspects of social work, and on an ever-deepening realization that schools and agencies are interdependent. . . ."

"The membership requirement of the American Association of Social Workers calling for '300 clock hours of supervised field work' is, and will continue to be, one



of the most important factors in raising the standard of field work instruction. . . .

"The problems we face are problems in the quality, and in the quantity, of professional education, problems that must be viewed realistically in terms of budgets, for it is not on good intentions alone that a school of social work can be built. The future development of schools of social work will be largely conditioned by the creation of a public opinion which will discriminate between the professional social worker and the non-professional counterfeit, even though the counterfeit be almost as good if not better than the original article, and which will insist upon a 'new conscience in public administration,' expressing itself in terms of merit systems; upon universities concerning themselves with the problems of social welfare and the adequate support of graduate schools of social work, and finally upon the understanding of the members of the profession of their own practice and of the relation between this practice and professional education."

#### *Educational Supervision.*

Virginia Robinson's rather intimate discussion on "The Educational Processes in Supervision and Class Room Discussion" offered some clues to the meaning of individual supervision. In a background statement she sketched the tremendous responsibility that is assumed by professional education in social work today to meet a demand for this kind of preparation in the midst of an accompanying opposition to all that training represents. Such opposition, she stated, is expressed negatively in an antagonism to case work, supervision and professional standards, and positively in an effort to set up the job of relief administration on standards of an industrial union instead of on professional ones. Social workers in their support of professional standards have a particular kind of strength.

There are, Miss Robinson says, changing educational values in the supervisory responsibility which one person with more knowledge and experience in the performance of a particular job takes for a person with less knowledge and experience in relation to that job; and the suitability of these values is different in different situations.

In professional education the person to person relationship of supervisor and worker has gained a place of importance peculiar to social work. This has paralleled the development of the case work relationship itself in social work. New understanding of function permits supervision to move out of a confusion in which it has sometimes approximated case work treatment and "in which it has often been used by workers for personal rather than professional help." Frank emphasis on the supervisor's teaching function admits a more penetrating aim which places value on important content to be imparted and holds up standards of skills and performance to be achieved.

It is in supervised practice related to a professional school curriculum particularly that the student can be assisted in a discipline and reorganization of his attitudes toward people to the end that his reactions may be helpful and his decisions and actions sound. "A new kind of self must be created in the student, a self which can function effectively in a social work job and which can maintain and develop the standards of the profession." Regular discussion with the student on what the client does and thinks and feels in the case work contacts "is the moving, changing, growing material on which student and supervisor work together." The student's growth of responsibility for himself as a social worker is the force which accomplishes his affirmation of his own ability and will to learn. Thus Miss Robinson helps to clarify the supervisor's role as an educational role, pointing out that the supervisor "takes responsibility for the development of a professional self and not for a personal self; and that the degree of control . . . is only justified by the function which is supported by the group, the profession as a whole."

She distinguishes between this fundamental educational process which a professional school can take responsibility for and a more superficial agency supervisory process which "should play an important and valuable role in social case work practice and training" if it is geared to the agency's function, service and administrative responsibility. Many workers who go directly to the staff of a social agency do not want to undergo the educational discipline required to become a responsible professional social worker. There is agency difference in the amount of responsibility certain of the staff are required to carry in terms of their own decisions and actions. For these reasons the level of their training should be limited and designed to relate them to the tasks they must perform and the organization they represent. It follows that at the same time opportunity should be provided here for creative thinking and "for movement on the part of outstanding, able workers whose interest becomes engaged, to seek professional training in schools of social work."

#### *Student Selection and Professional Training.*

Virginia Robinson's concept of professional education supports social work experience and belief that the student does not come to social work with a ready-made personality suitable for full social work responsibility.

At the same time, careful work is entailed in the process of selecting students for entrance into professional education. This is made obvious by the fact that in spite of the dearth of well qualified case workers which means that positions are avail-



able to untrained workers, the professional schools of social work are each year overwhelmed with applicants for training.

A paper by Rosemary Reynolds dealt with the experience of Western Reserve University where in 1935 the question of capacity alone made necessary the selection of one person out of every four making application. The majority of applicants, it was found, is made up of persons who are neither outstandingly good nor startlingly poor candidate material. Thus it is essential to determine the qualities and background sought in an applicant and the means to be used in sifting out applicants who possess these qualifications. The fact that there is an insufficient number of individuals in the country equipped with both skill in actual social work practice and the ability to teach those skills, plus the fact that well considered field work placements are seriously limited, makes it clear, it was brought out, that the schools cannot expand greatly at this time without impairing the quality of professional education.

The school depends mainly upon evidence in the college record, reference letters, autobiographical material and the personal interview, imperfect as these media may be, for the purpose of evaluating the applicant. Most schools, Miss Reynolds said, look for "people who are keen-minded without being drudges; comfortable enough in themselves not to need to scatter personal difficulties everywhere; aware of other people's problems and differences but not impelled to force them to change." She discussed these capacities in relation to the evidence that can be produced in the personal interview particularly as a means of communicating information.

#### *Adaptation of Standards*

It is reasonable to suppose that there is something in two such papers as Miss Robinson's and Miss Reynolds' which can be made useful to the consideration which is being given to the question of selection of personnel for government social work positions. "People who are keen-minded without being drudges; comfortable enough in themselves not to need to scatter personal difficulties everywhere; aware of other people's problems and differences but not impelled to force them to change," is probably as sound a basis for selection for beginning positions in public welfare as it is for selection of students in professional social work education. And the college record, reference letters, autobiographical material and personal interview used by the school as sources of information about applicants are the same sources that have proved useful under good civil service and other administrative procedures.

Miss Robinson's paper in suggesting some clari-

fication of what is involved in the discipline and reorganization of lay attitudes toward people that is necessary "to the end that reactions may be helpful and decisions and reactions sound," would seem to be a technical generalization that should be useful in connection with qualifications for special posts of responsibility in government social work. Such posts, Miss Robinson suggested, should be filled by professional persons who do not expect to duplicate in in-service training the process through which they themselves have passed but who out of this understanding can plan a supervisory process geared to the agency's function, service and administrative responsibility.

### III. INTERPRETATION OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Gradually social workers are developing a capacity for examining ideas and are thereby displacing the tendency to seek simple formulae or merely to line up with one "authority" against another "authority."

Interpretation which has been divorced from practice and the practitioners' use of social work experience has been an accepted procedure. This has led the professional social worker to neglect his responsibility first to the professional field and second to the public. His responsibility to the professional field calls for technical interpretation and his responsibility to the public calls for non-technical interpretation.

Separate papers by Grace F. Marcus, one given during the annual membership meeting of the Family Welfare Association of America and the other given in a meeting of the Social Case Work Section of the National Conference of Social Work, dealt with a concept of interpretation of social work which throws light on both the difficulties and the opportunities produced by the obligation of social workers to account to the public for their stewardship. Together these papers constitute a brief for both technical and non-technical interpretation and for certain differentiation of the two.

The papers suggested some of the things which it can be expected that the layman, without the faith that comes from direct experience with the service and without the practitioner's kind of experience, can be interested in and capable of understanding. Miss Marcus contrasted these with some of the things that we have erroneously expected the layman to grasp. She suggested that the factors which constitute legitimate differences between the social worker and the layman need to be sorted out in order to see what it is that the layman would want to know about social work and what social work needs to have him know.

To the layman the problems "outside" rather than the problems "within" the individual are



the "visible" problems which he can be expected to acknowledge. The layman's faith in social work skill cannot to any extent be built out of his direct experience with such a service but can be built upon facts which social work experience yields as to the "social realities which affect clients and non-clients alike." A common meeting ground rather than the struggle for sympathy and approval, it was suggested, will assist in organizing social work material for genuine communication that will bridge the gulf.

Social workers themselves have need on the other hand of an inter-communication on the technical processes which are necessarily their base for any professional synthesis of practice. "Interpretation has no more useful by-product than this of the self-analysis that is facilitated by making our ideas accessible to professional analysis and discussion."

External provocation and pressure, unlike public indifference, serve to stimulate a more productive explanation of social work by its practitioners which can separate out and develop that professional scrutiny of practices which leads in any profession to the formulation of technical principles and theory.

Speaking of case work, Miss Marcus drew attention to the fact that the practice "has evolved within an agency frame, has been naturally oriented to the agency's situation and responsibilities and found its most compelling stimulus to growth in its obligation to serve the agency's clients more effectively. . . . A respected index to our status has been our agency's reputation and our personal standing on its staff." However, these facts may account, she said, for our limited individual professional stature at the same time that they account for what social work has achieved. Exposed to almost no other test of their convictions than that of the agency's demands, social workers have been spared any disturbing challenge as to how willing they were to work for things beyond salary and status in the agency, and to use "individual initiative as members of a professional group to satisfy voluntary wider allegiances." It may be difficult to accept Miss Marcus' challenge and expectation for such wider development through "study inspired by the professional need to know" unless we are able to grant social work a potential place in the sciences such as medicine has enjoyed and unless we remind ourselves of the great personal sacrifice and individual effort which have gone into important scientific discoveries in other fields. It is necessary also to grant that in large part private social agency structure is opportunistic, and categorical services in public welfare are not consistent with a concept of

basic understanding of individuals or groups of individuals in need.

"Until emergencies arose which involved the interests of all social work," Miss Marcus said. "we case workers were so habituated to agency jealousies and competition, the isolation of the social work fields from one another, and the scramble for local funds and dominance that we did not realize how divided and dissipated were the energies required for the study of common professional problems." Interpretation, however, "must be grounded in a thorough command of the matter to be elucidated." Possessing at the present time almost no facilities for clinical exposition and interchange, we lack the base for technical interpretation of practice, Miss Marcus pointed out, without which "the possibilities of non-technical interpretation are uncharted and the real wealth of our experience is untapped."

One paper dealt with objective attitudes that social workers have acquired through special education and "for the same reason that a chemist has to know what is in his test tubes or a biologist that his slides are clean." The paper questioned non-technical interpretation which expects the layman to acquire these same attitudes when he has neither the means nor the purpose for doing so.

Although "we must await the development of a science of human relations which really explores the interrelations between the functioning organism of a culture and the functioning organism of the individual . . . if we wish to anticipate rather than be surprised by opposition, we must be intellectually prepared with material organized about controversial points as they will confront us from without."

Similarly Elizabeth McCord of the Social Security Board focused attention on the fact that the development of social work knowledge and skill in and of itself separates lay people and social workers. She pointed out that, "It is a difficult thing to accept the fact that the lay person's interest in social work is different from ours and that he will take over only a portion of what we think is important and only as that portion coincides with his own ideas and interests."

#### IV. SOCIAL WORK AND THE RELATED SCIENCES

There were two papers, one given by John Dollard at the dinner meeting of the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, the other by Dr. A. Kardiner in the Conference case-work section, which foreshadow the development of a new social psychology to which psychoanalytical study of the individual and sociological study of the culture may increasingly contribute. Dr. Dollard in his "Musings on Freud and Sumner" which will be printed in the *News Letter*



of the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers, pointed out how Sumner's concepts of social mores as "moral compulsives within a society" influencing the life and character of all its members, and Freud's concepts of the workings of the individual conscience might be joined into a potential base for a future science of human relations to which social work may make intimate professional reference. Dr. Kardiner dealing with "The Role of Economic Security in the Adaptation of the Individual" which will be printed in the October issue of *The Family*, presented a provocative example of the contribution which may be expected from a union of the theories of psychoanalysis and those of a dynamic sociology. After a challenging analysis of the various connotations "economic security" may have, he proceeded to discuss the role that work seems to have in the mental development of the individual, the traumatic effects of unemployment upon the individual's ability to function, and the unemployment neurosis which develops in certain predisposed persons. There were indicated in this paper the fruitful relations which may develop between psychoanalysis and cultural sociology to the benefit of social work background. Research possibilities in which a professional social worker might play a highly active role were also suggested.

#### V. FURTHER NOTES ON SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The meetings of the American Association of Psychiatric Social Workers again attracted large audiences interested in discussion of case work treatment. It is important to all social workers that this small professional organization has built progressively a program of papers dealing with techniques. However limited its beginnings such a program is the essence of professional criticism and growth. Assuming reasonably enough that requirements for "special" fields of social work will in time be reconciled and that one professional organization may serve the professional interests of all social workers, it is important meantime to note two things in the AAPSW program as being of concern to the field of social work: the establishment of a standard for psychiatric social work personnel which has been of assistance to employing groups and a program on case work techniques which furnishes a growing record of certain practices for professional scrutiny.

Similarly these elements in the program of the American Association of Medical Social Workers or other professional associations in the special areas of social work are important to the AASW.

The sessions on social group work showed the same seriousness of purpose that was manifest at the Montreal Conference with the result that

there seemed to be not only increased community of thinking within the group but a growing basis for better understanding on the part of other social workers. This is not easy to interpret but seems due in part to the fact that the discussion adhered to the functions and methods of group work in a growing understanding of what things communities of individuals suffer from and what expression they may give to these things both spontaneously and through encouragement. There was in these sessions the clarification of function emerging in group work fields and a consciousness of common elements apart from organization lines. Development of methods and theoretical concepts were discussed in their application to practice. Progress seems attributable to the use of study groups in different parts of the country on the same subject. At one of the meetings on personnel and professional training a coordinating committee was organized to bring together and distribute data on practice, experience, research and training.

#### VI. CERTIFICATION AND MERIT SYSTEMS

Discussion of certification suffered from some confusion in Conference meetings. Voluntary certification for admission to professional status in social work (national as in the AASW and state-wide as under the Department of Registration and Certification of the State Conference of Social Work in California) was at a number of points confused with the administrative procedure of certifying and selecting persons for particular jobs.

Because social workers still have difficulty in agreeing on basic content and because they lack experience in adapting to different conditions the standard which they have in AASW membership requirements, it is therefore difficult for them to realize that a combination of devices for protecting standards can be useful and interrelated. Certain papers given at the meetings in Atlantic City were therefore particularly welcome as accounts of actual experience in process and accomplishment with regard to selection of social workers for positions on a merit basis.

Pauline Miller, Director of Case Supervision and Personnel, Maryland Board of State Aid and Charities gave such a paper in a case work section meeting. It will be recalled that there was in the December, 1935, *Compass* an account by Miss Miller of the setting up of the Maryland procedure and that in the January, 1936, issue of *The Compass* full specifications for the positions entailed were given.

It is of particular interest that the American Public Welfare Association has put recent emphasis upon personnel standards and selection on a merit basis for government social workers which



is in line with the kind of qualifications the AASW has for years advocated for social workers under both public and private auspices.

Harrison Dobbs of Chicago University in his paper on "Lessons Learned in the Application of the Merit System to Public Welfare Administrative Units," outlined the history and development of three important experiments in certification in Chicago, the success of which Mr. Dobbs said spells better selection than is possible under existing civil service there and suggests methods for improving civil service procedure.

Recognition of social work as a profession, according to experience in Chicago, allows the establishment of a minimal standard of education and training for admission to the examination. The continuous work and influence of the Citizens' Advisory Committee have favored good personnel standards; and reliability and economy are accomplished facts on this basis.

Edith Abbott speaking for the establishment of a merit system through the adoption of proper civil service laws said:

"As social workers we should instruct our professional organization, the American Association of Social Workers, to go before the platform committee of every political party and ask support for certain planks about which we are all agreed. A civil service plank must go before every state convention."

## VII. EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

It is somewhat difficult to trace discussion of employment practices as such in the meetings at the Conference. In the first place standards and practices are interrelated both in theory and in fact. Practices are established and maintained through all formal procedure such as any civil service system sets up. Points bearing on employment practices, both directly and indirectly, were to be found in Conference papers under such headings as Civil Service, Public Welfare Personnel and Personnel Selection. Practices were implied in much of the discussion of personnel requirements, expectations and difficulties in connection with public welfare administration as a subject.

A paper by Leah Feder on personnel given at a meeting of the Family Welfare Association of America, which convened for three days just prior to the National Conference of Social Work, dealt with some of the factors in agency practice. Miss Feder discussed staff responsibilities and delegation of these on the basis of special interest and ability. To quote from Miss Feder's paper: "Too much stress has perhaps been laid on the qualifications of the worker and not enough care has been given to an analysis of the situation within an agency before the worker takes a position. . . . The

prospective worker will wish to have not only a clear-cut explanation of function and staff equipment, but he will want also a picture of how the agency can utilize his particular capacity and skill at the moment. Frequently an agency underestimates the value of its program in attracting a staff when actually it may have unusual opportunities to offer. Would you perhaps be impressed by the candidate who inquired not only about salary, promotion and case work opportunities, but also about the place of your agency in the general community picture, the variety of experience available and the quality of supervision he might expect? A job analysis may prove stimulating not only to the agency in finding someone who can meet the qualifications of the particular job, but also to the candidate in determining whether or not he wishes to consider the job. . . . Family agencies have not only a responsibility for careful selection of personnel and development of personnel on the job, but they have also an obligation to keep their workers abreast of the developments in the field. . . ."

The three Jewish Conferences which met jointly following the National Conference of Social Work devoted a session to the subject of Employment Practices and Relationships. An informative paper was given by Maurice Taylor in which he had assembled many facts about conditions and had traced factors in certain trends in employee organization. A code of personnel practices was discussed by the National Association of Jewish Center Executives; and it was agreed that the three Jewish Conferences should work on a common code during the coming year.

Security for the Social Worker was the subject of a dinner meeting of the National Coordinating Committee of Social Service Employee Groups. In a paper on "Contributions of a Professional Organization to Security for the Social Worker," Alfred Winters discussed the range of activities of a professional association which can and does improve the quality of professional personnel and the content of professional practice. He outlined the forms of activity as: setting criteria for personnel standards and practices in public and private agencies; insistence upon competency as a factor in performance and the range of influence that a professional association has in the various phases of social work practice, which influence is exemplified in a continuous survey and study of the field; influence exerted upon professional schools of social work to adjust curricula to changing needs in the profession; and position taken on various public questions which affect the practice of social work in either public or private agencies.

A paper by Jacob Fisher on "Contributions of a Trade Union to Security for the Social Worker"



argued that a professional association or organization could not hope to influence to a great extent the working conditions under which the individual members of such a professional organization are expected to practice their profession. He drew from that premise the conclusion that only a labor union which could use collective bargaining tactics could hope to improve the economic status of the individual member or the conditions under which the members of such a group are expected to work. Mr. Fisher suggested that a professional association could not, because of its constitutional limitations, engage in activities which would improve the economic status of its members. The paper favored numerical strength and the inclusion of all working personnel in welfare agencies. Collective bargaining was not presented as different method, but as preferred method for effectiveness. The paper did not deal with the question of eligibility rules which would be involved in the operation of an organized union.

The third paper in this session, delivered by Edwin Burgum of the American Federation of Teachers, New York City, dealt with the aims and operations of the Teachers' Union. He expressed the opinion that a professional organization is helpful in the refining of practice in the field and in making available to its members certain new developments within the profession. As a vehicle for collective bargaining through pressure techniques, he stated that he believed that a professional association is less effective than a union organization. In using for illustration of his points successful operations of the Teachers' Union in New York City, Mr. Burgum emphasized the technique of influencing bodies such as the City Board of Aldermen and the voting strength represented in the Union and the numerical strength of other union groups affiliated with the A. F. of L. He did not point out to his large audience that in order to become eligible for membership in the Teachers' Union and eligible for all the benefits which such a union may be able to bestow on its members, a teacher has to present evidence to support his claim that he is a teacher who has met certain general and special educational requirements and has passed the competitive examination given by the State of New York.

Thus the effectiveness of the Teachers' Union was not pointed out as having any relation to professional membership qualifications or to the legal status which teachers have acquired and by which the public benefits because of the professional organizational activities of teachers. It was not pointed out that the pressure brought upon the City Board of Aldermen on the basis of voting strength is possible without destroying professional standards because of the fact that the stand-

ards are already established. Nevertheless, Mr. Burgum used the illustration of the New York City Teachers' Union and its effectiveness in contrast to a professional organization's effectiveness as though there could be an analogy in this for social work at this stage. In another session Francis Gorman, militant labor leader and secretary of the United Textile Workers of America, appealed to his audience as a disadvantaged occupational group which should join the Farmer-Labor movement.

Thus the thesis appeared to be unionism versus professionalism as though one were a substitute for the other.

#### GROWTH IN PROSPECTIVES

In spite of and in part because of the pressure that results from many factors in society today that are beyond social work's control, the marked thread of professional consciousness which this year's National Conference program showed will add to the growing body of social work literature which has a professional core.

For the AASW, the Conference serves a realistic index to currents in the field to which the program of the professional association is directed.

### Announcement of Change in "Compass" Publication Schedule

*The Compass* has previously been published monthly except August. This schedule has now been changed so that *The Compass* will appear monthly except September, beginning with the next issue. The issue of August, 1936, will therefore become Number 11 of Volume XVII, and, with the omission of the September issue, the October, 1936, issue will become Number 1 of Volume XVIII.

#### NOTICE OF ERROR IN DIRECTORY

The attention of members is called to an error in the summary of the membership requirements on page XII of the *Directory of Members*. Under the summary of the Junior Membership requirements the statement in the Directory specifies under point No. 3 that 24 semester hours in technical social work courses are required, whereas the correct figure for Junior Membership is 10 semester hours in technical social work courses (24 semester hours in technical social work courses is the requirement for Full Membership).

Members are asked to make this correction in their personal copies of the Directory. Errata slips have been printed for insertion in the remainder of the edition and these slips should be secured from the national office for insertion in any copies which are being used for reference purposes by chapters, libraries, and agencies.



## New Jersey Experiments With Starvation

RELIEF COSTS CUT IN HALF BY HOME RULE IN NEW JERSEY. 38% DECLINE IN CASES, 53% DROP IN EXPENDITURES, FOUND BY RESEARCH BUREAU. (*Herald-Tribune*, June 8, 1936)

NEW RELIEF SET-UP FOUND DEPLORABLE. BARNARD SAYS THE REPORTED SAVING IN SOME AREAS OF STATE IS TRIVIAL. COMMISSIONER ELLIS HOLDS NEEDY ARE NOW TREATED LIKE ELIZABETHAN PAUPERS. (*New York Times*, June 14, 1936)

HOPKINS HITS RELIEF CLAIMS IN NEW JERSEY. SAYS WPA SURVEY SHOWS STARVATION, DISEASE IN MANY HOMES. (*Newark Evening News*, June 16, 1936)

WARNING SOUNDED BY CITIES. DECLARE STATE MUST HELP IN RELIEF EMERGENCY. LARGE CITIES FACE BANKRUPTCY. (*Trenton Times*, June 15, 1936.)

JERSEY SETS ASIDE RELIEF FUND. BOTH HOUSES AGREE ON \$6,000,000 TO AID NEEDY. (*New York Times*, June 18, 1936)

THESE newspaper headlines tell only a part of the story of the New Jersey relief experiment, but are interesting as a chronological table of shifting convictions which followed the abandonment of the State Emergency Relief Administration and the return of responsibility for relief to the cities and towns.

During April when the state legislature failed to provide funds for the centralized state relief agency which had administered relief in New Jersey since 1931, the announcement was made that the state organization would be disbanded, the unexpended balance of its funds divided among the various local governmental units, and that henceforth these local units would be called upon to provide relief for dependent persons in their jurisdictions.

On April 15th the state organization went out of existence and local overseers of the poor assumed responsibility for relief. Within a few days newspapers carried accounts of savings in relief costs, under local operation, and corresponding reductions in case loads. These accounts were based to some extent on official pronouncements by local overseers who claimed that local administration was both more economical and efficient than the previous centralized administration under the state ERA.

The newspaper accounts indicated that local officials were content to assume all responsibility for relief and to pay the cost of such aid, despite the fact that under the ERA local districts contributed less than 10% of the total relief expenditure.

Within a short time, however, a change in sentiment was noted and local officials announced that the drain upon local funds for relief was such that many cities and towns were in straitened circumstances. This sentiment resulted in a meeting of city and county officials in Trenton where statements were made to the effect that the announced reductions in costs and relief loads had been greatly exaggerated and that many cities and towns faced bankruptcy if state aid was not forthcoming. City officials reported that reductions in case loads and relief costs were restricted to small communities and that a large part of the drop was due to seasonal employment, which is an annual occurrence in the agricultural and resort areas of the state. Representatives from the industrial centers were frank in stating that in their communities neither case loads nor costs had been materially reduced. They did say that some reductions in costs had been effected through the elimination of certain items of relief which they recognized as essential but which they stated they could not continue to supply from available local funds.

They stated that many municipalities were unprepared to deal with the problem on a local basis and that they were spending the money that was available sparingly and would be forced to suspend relief when funds were exhausted. They pointed out that there would be an increase in relief loads in the fall when seasonal employment would no longer be a factor and it would be necessary to supply an increased amount of relief to those families currently existing on inadequate relief allowances.

The situation prevailing in New Jersey at the moment is typical of conditions existing in many other areas in the country since the withdrawal of federal funds to states for direct relief. There appears to be an increasing unwillingness on the part of many state governments to continue to finance direct relief programs. Without federal financial assistance coupled with regulations for standards which establish some uniformity in practice and guarantee that persons in need, regardless of the jurisdiction in which they may be found, will be supplied with assistance commensurate with their needs, the situation will continue to prevail.

Copies of the AASW survey of the New Jersey situation upon which this article is based are available through the national office.



The *Newark Ledger* in an editorial summed up the situation in these words:

"What actually happened, of course, was that the State suspended its relief activities not because of any plan or design but simply because the Legislature could not decide on how to raise the revenue. The burden was turned over to municipalities, most of which were unprepared to deal with the problem. The municipalities took the only course that was open to them. They spent what money they had available and beyond that suspended relief."

The fact soon became clear that during the period between the first announcements of the benefits of local control and the realization on the part of city and town officials that local districts could not either administer or finance the program without state assistance, the administration of relief in the state with the exception of the large industrial centers, (particularly Newark and Passaic, which adhered to policies of the defunct ERA) reverted to the poor law practices of more than 20 years ago, with consequent suffering on the part of those who were dependent upon relief for their subsistence. It was revealed that the reductions in relief costs in many areas, which had been heralded as examples of the efficiency of local administration, were accomplished through such devices as the arbitrary refusal to grant relief to unattached and able-bodied persons, the denial of milk to children, the placing of whole families on starvation rations, the elimination of rent and fuel as essential items of relief, and the denial of needed medical attention to the dependent ill. The methods used by local administrators in some quarters were revealed as a harsh, oppressive, cruel and arbitrary rule of thumb judgment by untrained, unskilled persons recently appointed as overseers of the poor.

Examples were cited of investigations of persons applying for relief being made by uniformed firemen and policemen and of a police station being used as a relief bureau where persons applying for assistance were interviewed by a police captain serving as an unremunerated overseer of the poor. In some of the smaller communities instances were cited of overseers administering relief from their back porches during the evening when they had finished their regular day's work in some other line of activity.

The Works Progress Administration, after an investigation during which time families who were receiving or had been denied relief were visited in their homes, issued a statement pointing out that the local administration of relief in many communities had caused extreme suffering and hardship. This investigation revealed, for example, the death of a baby in one family because of

lack of milk, distribution of damaged and condemned food to relief families in one district, the denial of all relief except a sub-standard ration of food to a 70 year old couple, both ill and infirm and unable to secure fuel to cook the food which was supplied to them, the denial of insulin to diabetic patients who instead were supplied with an inadequate food ration which in itself was detrimental to the health of persons so afflicted. It was also revealed that in many communities all persons who received any relief whatever were required to work for their meagre food allowances at manual labor. This forced labor policy did not discriminate between able-bodied, the aged or infirm.

That these practices may become the permanent method of relief administration in many sections of New Jersey there can be no doubt, despite the fact that the state legislature, acting after pressure had been brought to bear upon it by municipal officials, appropriated \$6,000,000 to provide state aid to local districts for relief. This fund, which is approximately half of the amount estimated as required for the balance of the year, will be administered by a partisan commission set up pursuant to a law passed April 27, 1936, which provides that the governor, the state comptroller, the state treasurer, the chairmen of the house and senate appropriations committees shall comprise a state financial assistance commission to administer grants-in-aid to local governmental units for relief, but which does not provide for the establishment of any uniform standards of practice or policy.

Thus the State of New Jersey has abolished a non-partisan state relief administration, which for four years made a determined and effective fight for the maintenance of adequate standards of relief and competent humane methods, and has substituted for it a partisan commission to furnish some state aid without provisions for either adequate standards of relief or competent non-political administration.

The series of events that led up to this change began with the withdrawal of federal aid for direct relief to the states in December, 1935. Prior to that withdrawal the federal, state and local governments were bound in a partnership arrangement which did more than provide funds. The State of New Jersey, in common with other states at that time, was required to meet certain standards of decency in the administration of relief and the amount and kind of relief granted in order to be eligible to receive federal funds.

The citizen members of the New Jersey ERA board were anxious and willing to maintain such standards and to insure uniform treatment for all needy persons in all areas of the state. However,



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when the federal government withdrew its financial support it also withdrew its moral support, and from that point on it became increasingly difficult for the state ERA to secure state funds or public support for its program of adequate relief.

The withdrawal of federal interest in the problem of providing for the large numbers of persons who could not be provided for through a restricted federal work program later had even more serious consequences, for it created in the minds of many state officials, who were willing to go along on a partnership basis with the federal government, a question of the validity of a direct relief program.

If the federal government could turn responsibility for relief back to the states—as a local problem—why couldn't the states turn it back to the cities and towns?, was the question that many state legislators raised when the problem of providing state funds for direct relief became acute.

An increasing number of legislators, bedevilled with the problem of creating new taxes to provide funds, gave this question attention as the problem became more pressing. This contagious state of mind gave those in other quarters who were anxious to liquidate an acknowledged non-partisan relief administration an opportunity to accomplish their purpose under the pretense that "home rule" was a desirable governmental objective.

The recent interest of the federal government in the plight of those unfortunates who are now the victims of this home rule in relief is laudable, and the WPA survey of the situation a forthright and courageous document—however, it seems unfortunate that the government and those responsible for the withdrawal of federal funds and federal interest in the problem, do not even yet realize or acknowledge how much of the responsibility for what has happened in New Jersey can be traced to the withdrawal of federal interest and federal funds.

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